

Scientists are racing to understand the omicron variant, but anti-vaccine misinformation about omicron is already being spread | The Washington Post

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In July, a fake slide deck with the logos of the World Health Organization and the World Economic Forum purporting to show a schedule for when coronavirus variants would be “released” rocketed around social media, racking up thousands of likes on Twitter and Instagram.

Anti-vaccine influencers posted the image, citing it as proof that the pandemic was orchestrated by powerful interests, and that new variants of the disease were all part of a shadowy plan.

Fast forward to the end of November, when South African scientists identified the omicron variant and warned that it had a high number of mutations. While public health officials around the world cautioned people not to jump to conclusions before the variant could be studied more closely, the fake image recirculated on social media, posted by people adamant that omicron was just the next step of a global conspiracy.

Other false claims about the new variant have leaped across the Internet in the two weeks since it was first identified. One post in a group with more than a million members on the Telegram messaging app claimed the vaccines had caused the omicron variant, according to First Draft, a nonprofit that investigates misinformation.

[...]

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